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**Macroeconomic policy questions: international trade
and development**

**Identical letters dated 17 October 2011 from the Permanent
Representative of the Syrian Arab Republic to the United Nations
addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the
General Assembly**

The United States of America has imposed a series of unilateral economic, trade and financial sanctions. The first of those sanctions were imposed by the previous President of the United States in 2003 under the so-called Syria Accountability Act. Regrettably, those unilateral sanctions and measures are still in place. The United States recently imposed a number of sanctions that directly target the economic, financial and banking sectors in the Syrian Arab Republic. Among the most significant of those sanctions were the prohibition on conducting business with or investing in the Syrian petroleum sector and the prohibition or restriction of activities with the Syrian Arab Republic in the commercial, financial banking, information technology, communications and investment sectors.

The sanctions imposed by the United States against the Syrian Arab Republic are illegal because they violate the provisions of the Charter. The United Nations, acting through its bodies and specialized agencies, set out to highlight the danger of those sanctions and their negative effect on the Syrian economy and the foreign trade of the Syrian Arab Republic. For example, the report of the Secretary-General issued as document A/66/138 notes that, according to the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), the banning of exports of United States products to the Syrian Arab Republic places a trade and development burden on the country. A range of goods and services needed for development purposes have either become unavailable or restricted owing to the higher price the consumer must pay for them from non-American sources. This impacts both local industries and consumers. Local industries are unable to access technologically rich goods and services that may lead to higher efficiency in output while consumers are also unable to enjoy American-made products that may be of better quality compared to the available alternatives.



In addition to the above-mentioned sanctions imposed by the United States, the States of the European Union, the Syrian Arab Republic's largest trading partner, imposed a series of unilateral sanctions against the Syrian Arab Republic, the latest of which was announced by the Council of the European Union on 23 September 2011 prohibiting investment in the Syrian petroleum sector. The Council also prohibited European investment in Syrian companies, whether inside or outside of Syria, engaged in the exploration, production or refining of crude oil; the granting of any financial loan or the creation of new joint ventures with those companies; and the supply of Syrian denominated banknotes printed in European Union States to the Syrian Arab Republic. The aforementioned sanctions supplement the sanctions the European Union had imposed on 2 September 2011 prohibiting the import of Syrian oil.

Canada recently imposed unilateral sanctions against the Syrian petroleum sector similar to those that were imposed by the United States and the States of the European Union. Australia has also prohibited the export of certain Australian goods to Syria.

In accordance with the Charter and the relevant General Assembly resolutions, the Syrian Arab Republic considers that unilateral economic sanctions, such as those imposed by the United States, the European Union and other States, are a means of political and economic coercion against Syria, and that they are aimed at affecting Syria's ability to take political decisions independently.

The Syrian Arab Republic would also like to highlight the negative effect that such illegal unilateral sanctions have on the world's peoples, in particular those in the developing world. It considers them to be an instrument of Western domination aimed at provoking anti-Western sentiment: most such measures have been and continue to be imposed by Western States, in particular the United States and the European States, in order to weaken the Governments of the States Members of the United Nations or bring pressure to bear on them in order to compel them to take certain actions or change their policies. Those facts are all confirmed by the ESCWA report contained in the report of the Secretary-General issued as document A/66/138.

That so many States had voted in favour of successive General Assembly resolutions calling on the United States to end its economic, commercial and financial embargo of Cuba clearly demonstrates the international community's rejection of the imposition of unilateral economic measures by any Member State against another State. General Assembly resolution 65/6, entitled "Necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba", was adopted by a vote of 187 to 2. The two States that voted against the resolution were the United States and Israel, both of which have in common the imposition of the same type of sanctions, the former against Cuba and the latter against the Gaza Strip in occupied Palestine. The result of the voting on the resolution concerning the ending of the embargo against Cuba underscores that, by voting against that resolution, Israel clearly supports the policy of imposing illegal unilateral economic sanctions against developing States. This is a policy that, in fact, Israel continues to practice by imposing a complete blockade against the Gaza Strip in occupied Palestine and by depriving the Palestinian people, in particular the residents of the Gaza Strip, of the necessities of a decent living and development. This is confirmed by the report of ESCWA that is annexed to the

report of the Secretary-General issued as document A/66/138. In its report, the Commission indicates that the most severe case of unilateral sanctions is the blockade imposed by Israel on the Gaza Strip. This blockade not only violates the principles of international law that are relevant to international trade, but it also violates other aspects of the Fourth Geneva Convention, namely article 33, which prohibits collective punishment.

It is clear from the way the international community rejects the embargo imposed on Cuba by the United States and the embargo that Israel has imposed on the Gaza Strip that the Syrian Arab Republic is joined by the overwhelming majority of States Members in considering that the maintenance by certain United Nations States Members of coercive unilateral economic measures against developing countries constitutes a violation of international law and the rules of international trade and has a particularly deleterious impact on the economies and development efforts of developing countries and the living standards and well-being of their peoples. The imposition of those coercive unilateral measures also affects the vital economic sectors of the countries involved, including the financial, economic, investment, tourism and services sectors. A further impact is on international economic cooperation and on global efforts to move towards an open and non-discriminatory multilateral trading system. Those facts were underlined by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development in its summary of the latest developments it had observed in the trade of the countries, including the Syrian Arab Republic, that are currently affected by unilateral economic sanctions, when it noted that the major impact of the coercive measures applied to the countries is felt in loss of trade and foreign exchange earnings and reduction in production capacity and employment, while the economic and social welfare of citizens in the targeted countries, particularly those in the middle- and low-income groups, is also affected.

The sanctions that are imposed on developing countries by certain States Members, including the most recent sanctions imposed by Europe and the United States on the Syrian Arab Republic, represent the pursuit by those countries of a series of policies on collective punishment, which is internationally outlawed. Those policies, which are pursued on the pretext of protecting human rights, constitute a flagrant violation of the principles of international law and demolish the principle of the sovereign equality of all States and the rules of international trade. They also constitute a violation of the relevant General Assembly resolutions, the most recent of which was 65/6, and of resolution 64/189, which urges the international community to adopt urgent and effective measures to eliminate the use of unilateral coercive economic measures against developing countries that are not authorized by relevant organs of the United Nations or are inconsistent with the principles of international law as set forth in the Charter of the United Nations and that contravene the basic principles of the multilateral trading system, and calls upon the international community to condemn and reject the imposition of the use of such measures as a means of political and economic coercion against developing countries. Those measures are, furthermore, incompatible with General Assembly resolution 62/183, which provides that no State may use or encourage the use of unilateral economic, political or any other type of measures to coerce another State in order to obtain from it the subordination of the exercise of its sovereign rights. General Assembly resolution 65/217, entitled "Human rights and unilateral coercive measures", states that unilateral coercive measures create obstacles to trade relations among States, thus impeding the full realization of the rights set forth in the

Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international human rights instruments, in particular the right of individuals and peoples to development.

The strategies and policies of the Syrian Arab Republic are based on full respect for human rights and the desire for the development and well-being of its population. Syria adheres to its national principles and legitimate rights as well as to the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and, in particular, the principles of respect for the sovereignty of States and non-intervention in their internal affairs. The Government of Syria has accorded the utmost importance to the realization of the reforms that were recently announced, which it is determined to carry out. Those reforms are intended to achieve development in all its forms and ensure the security, peace and welfare of Syrian citizens. If those aims are to be achieved, Syria needs the support of all States for the proposed reforms and their cooperation and coordination, on the basis of the principles of respect for the right to sovereignty, the legitimate interests of States, and non-intervention in internal affairs. Diktats, threats and sanctions are not constructive. The Syrian Arab Republic further requests the international community and United Nations bodies to underline the need for the States which impose coercive unilateral economic measures on developing countries, including the Syrian Arab Republic, to halt such measures forthwith, as well as their inflammatory campaigns to provoke other States to impose such measures, which violate the principles of international legitimacy and have a negative impact on the future of developing countries and their populations. Finally, the Syrian Arab Republic calls upon the United Nations Secretary-General, as one of the responsibilities assigned to him by the Charter of the United Nations and the relevant General Assembly resolutions, to raise in all international gatherings and meetings and, in particular, meetings of the Group of Twenty (G-20) and of the Group of Eight Industrialized Countries (G8), the issue of the illegitimacy of the unilateral economic measures which certain Member States impose on other countries for the purpose of political coercion.

(Signed) Bashar Ja'afari

Ambassador

Permanent Representative of
the Syrian Arab Republic to the United Nations